

CALIFORNIA DREAM ACT SERVICE INCENTIVE GRANT (DSIG) PROGRAM

FAQ FOR STUDENTS

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Program Overview Questions

1. What is the California Dream Act Service Incentive Grant (DSIG) Program?

DSIG encourages California Dream Act Application (CADAA) students to perform community or volunteer service. The grant will be available to students for up to 8 semesters or up to 12 quarters while they have an active Cal Grant A or B award. Cal Grant A recipients must have met Cal Grant B eligibility. Students shall perform at least 150 hours per semester or 100 hours per quarter of community or volunteer service with a qualifying service organization.

2. How many DSIG awards are available?

The program is limited to 1,667 participants annually. Students must meet the criteria for an eligible student, attend a qualifying institution, and perform the required service hours with a qualifying organization.

3. How much can I receive?

The California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) will award up to \$4,500 per academic year (up to \$2,250 per semester or up to \$1,500 per quarter).

Eligibility Questions

1. Who is eligible for the DSIG Program?

- Students with a completed and submitted California Dream Act Application (CADAA) for the interested academic year.
- Active recipients of a Cal Grant A or Cal Grant B award. Cal Grant A recipients must have met Cal Grant B eligibility.
- Students with enough financial need (determined by CSAC or the institution).
- Students enrolled at a qualifying institution on the [CSAC website](#).

Students must also meet Satisfactory Academic Progress and complete any necessary verification for their Cal Grant A or B award.

2. How will the Cal Grant Reform Act impact DSIG eligibility if it is enacted?

The Cal Grant Reform Act would replace the existing Cal Grant program with a new version that provides a Cal Grant 2 for eligible California community college students with financial need and provides a Cal Grant 4 for eligible four-year university students with financial need.

In the spring of 2024, a final determination will be made on whether the Cal Grant Reform Act will be enacted. More information about how Cal Grant Reform will impact DSIG eligibility will be provided following spring of 2024.

3. What is unmet need and how does it affect DSIG?

Need is established by taking the cost of attendance and subtracting expected family contribution (EFC)/ student aid index (SAI). If a student does not have enough need they will not qualify for the award. Students should consult with their financial aid office for information regarding their current unmet need.

4. I am a Cal Grant A student that was financially ineligible for Cal Grant B in my initial award year. I currently meet the Cal Grant B income and asset ceilings. Should I still submit my Grant Application?

Yes. Your Financial Aid Administrator will need to submit a Grant Application Appeal with your Grant Application. The Financial Aid Administrator at your campus should contact the DSIG program to request the appeal form.

5. How long can I receive DSIG?

A student can receive DSIG for as long as they have an active Cal Grant A or B award. As a reminder, Cal Grant A recipients must have met Cal Grant B eligibility. Students can receive the grant for up to 8 semesters or 12 quarters. When a student has exhausted their Cal Grant A or B eligibility, they will also no longer be allowed to participate in DSIG.

6. Is DSIG open to undergraduates only?

No, Teacher Credential Program (TCP) students are eligible. Students can only receive the grant for up to 8 semesters or 12 quarters. When a student has exhausted their Cal Grant A or B eligibility, they will also no longer be allowed to participate in DSIG.

7. Do Foster Youth qualify for extended eligibility?

No, students can only receive the grant for up to 8 semesters or 12 quarters. When a student has exhausted their Cal Grant A or B eligibility, they will also no longer be allowed to participate in DSIG.

8. Would a DSIG award impact my eligibility for the Middle Class Scholarship (MCS)?

Students should consult with their financial aid office for more information on how a DSIG award could impact their MCS eligibility.

9. I am attending school less than half-time, am I eligible for an award?

No, in order to receive the grant, a student must be enrolled at least half-time.

Application Questions

1. How do I apply for DSIG?

Students will need to apply annually to participate in DSIG. The DSIG Grant Application and instructions can be found on the [Apply webpage](#).

2. When is the application due?

Applications are available beginning July 1st and will be accepted through the end of the academic year (June 30th) or until all awards are exhausted, whichever comes first.

3. Does DSIG eligibility rollover?

No, DSIG eligibility is based on the corresponding Cal Grant award year. Students will need to apply annually to participate in the DSIG Program. The program is open from July 1 to June 30 and follows the annual academic year.

4. What if I transfer to another institution?

You will need to re-register and submit a new Grant Application form with validation from the new institution.

5. What if I attend more than one institution?

Students must select one campus in charge of disbursement. Students should consult with their financial aid office for more information.

Community and Volunteer Service Questions

1. Where can I perform my service hours?

Students can volunteer with any non-profit or local government entity on the [List of Service Organizations](#). Non-profits or local government entities not on the List of Service Organizations can be added if they meet the criteria for a qualifying community or volunteer service organization.

Students can also volunteer with any school on the Cal Grant Eligible Schools list on the [CSAC website](#). On-campus community or volunteer service organizations affiliated with a Cal Grant eligible school, such as outreach, student services, and multi-cultural organizations are deemed eligible and do not require additional registration. Please note that these organizations are NOT included on the List of Service Organizations.

2. What is a qualifying community or volunteer service organization?

- A nonprofit as defined in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
- Any federal, state, or local government entity.
- Any school on the Cal Grant Eligible Schools list on the [CSAC website](#).

3. What requirements does a service organization need to meet to participate?

- Organization shall have been established for a minimum of two years before the first date on which a participating student begins performing service hours to qualify for this program.
- Community or volunteer service performed by the participating student is not advocacy of a political, social, or religious nature.
- Community or volunteer service is related to the participating student's field of study or is in furtherance of community service or a community need.

4. What volunteer activities are permissible under the requirement that “The community or volunteer service performed by the participating student is not advocacy of a political, social, or religious nature?”

You cannot volunteer for an organization that engages exclusively in political, social, or religious advocacy. Therefore, participating students can only work on tasks that are unrelated to advocacy efforts for organizations that have a mix of advocacy and non-advocacy programs.

CSAC will validate this requirement by reviewing all of the activities listed on the Service Hour Tracker that accepted students submit with their Payment Requests and verify that the activities were not directly tied to any political, social, or religious advocacy, as described in the paragraph above.

Contact dsig@csac.ca.gov if you still have questions about this requirement.

5. Can I volunteer at more than one service organization at a time?

There is no limit to the number of organizations you can volunteer with. All organizations must meet the requirements of a qualifying service organization and be listed on the Grant Application form.

6. Am I required to complete a Live Scan to participate in DSIG?

No. Background checks are not required to participate in DSIG. However, some service organizations may require Live Scan or other types of background checks.

Payment Request Questions

1. How many hours must I complete before payment?

Students can request payment after performing at least 150 hours per semester or 100 hours per quarter of community or volunteer service.

2. I completed less than the required number of hours can I request a partial payment?

No, a student may only request payment after completing the required number of hours.

3. I completed the required service hours. How do I receive payment?

Students can request payment after performing at least 150 hours per semester or 100 hours per quarter of community or volunteer service.

Students must submit the Payment Request form along with documentation of the service hours performed. The Payment Request form and instructions can be found on the [Request Payment webpage](#).

4. How do I show CSAC I completed the required number of service hours?

Documentation of service hours performed can be submitted on the DSIG Program Service Hours Tracker or on any other type of documentation utilized by the service organization(s) if the documentation includes the name and signature of the certifying official.

5. Do I need to complete my hours within the term I will be requesting payment?

No. If you have been accepted into the program and have completed the required 150 hours per semester or 100 hours per quarter, you can request payment as long as those hours are completed within the academic year (July 1 through June 30).

6. Is there a deadline to request a DSIG payment?

Yes. DSIG payment deadline is in September following the award year. However, you must complete the required hours for DSIG (150 hours per semester/100 hours per quarter) within the academic year you are accepted into the program.

7. Can I receive a DSIG Payment before receiving a Cal Grant Payment?

No. You must be actively enrolled and receiving Cal Grant payments to receive a DSIG payment. This means that a Cal Grant Payment must occur for each DSIG Payment.

8. I dropped below half time, what happens to my award?

DSIG will follow your standard Cal Grant A or B payment process. Payments will be made based on the recipient's enrollment status using the institution's add/drop date, financial aid census date, or its equivalent. Students should consult with their financial aid office for information on how changing enrollment status can affect their financial aid.

9. My annual unmet need is less than \$4,500. How will I be paid?

Students should consult with their financial aid office for information regarding their current unmet need and how an annual unmet need of less than \$4,500 will impact their DSIG term payment amounts.

10. How will I be paid for my service?

If approved for payment, your DSIG payment will be disbursed via check and mailed to your school's Financial Aid Office. Your check will be made out to you and in care of your school. Your Financial Aid Office will notify you once the check is available for pick up or is deposited into your student account at your school.

11. Can DSIG funds be used to pay an existing balance I have at my school?

DSIG disbursement must align with existing published school policies for Cal Grant access. Contact your financial aid office to discuss your DSIG payment options.

12. Who is notified of an approved Payment Request?

If you are approved for payment, you and the financial aid administrator on your Payment Request will receive an email notification once your check is mailed to your school's Financial Aid Office.

If your Payment Request is incomplete, you will receive an email letting you know what revisions are required.

13. What is the processing time for a Payment Request?

Standard processing time for Payment Requests is 4-6 weeks. This processing time includes CSAC staff validating a Payment Request, requesting the check from the California State Controller's Office (SCO) and delivery of the checks to the institution's financial aid office. Delays may occur due to state fiscal year end processing and/or natural disasters.

14. What are the DSIG disbursement policies for check handling?

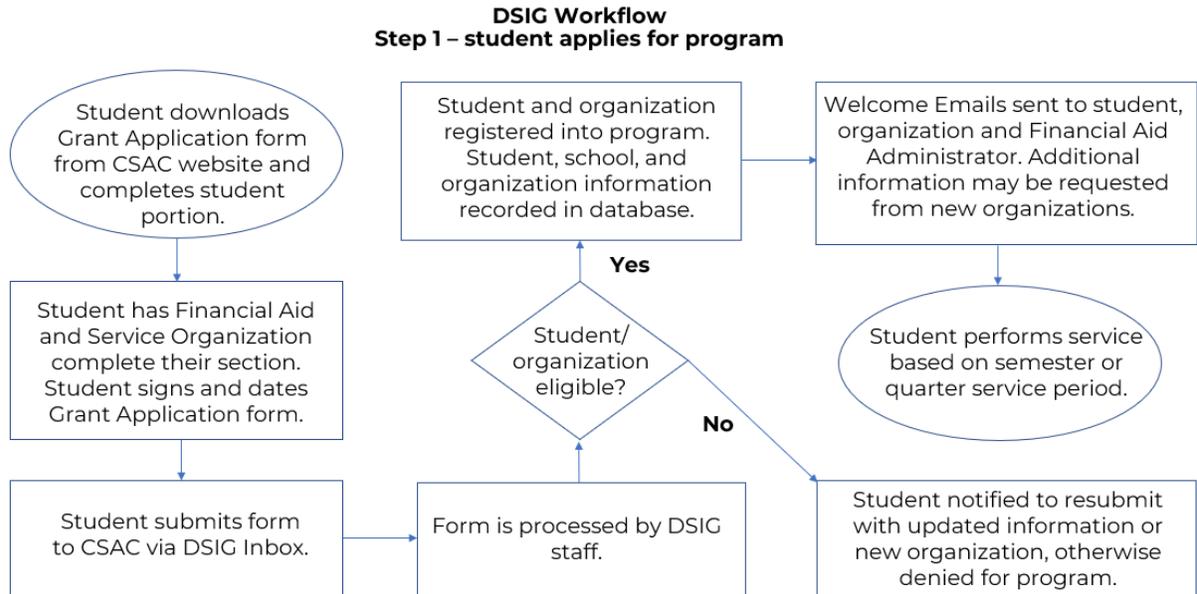
For check handling, if you are accepted into the program and your Payment Request has been approved, no one, under any circumstance, is allowed to pick up your check on your behalf. Your school may require you to provide your signature to verify that you received your check.

15. Are DSIG awards considered taxable income?

Students are advised to seek guidance from a tax advisor.

DSIG Workflow

Step 1 – Student applies for the DSIG Program



Step 2 – Student requests payment from the DSIG Program

